

PRESS OFFICE

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SBA, MLK Sr. Community Resources Collaborative, Ebenezer Baptist Church kickoff HERO Alliance, in Atlanta

Partnership will target barriers to employment and success

ATLANTA – Officials from the [U.S. Small Business Administration](#), [Ebenezer Baptist Church](#) and the [MLK Sr. Community Resources Collaborative](#) officially launched the Helping Everyone Reach Opportunities (HERO) program on Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2016, with the signing of a Strategic Alliance Memorandum.

HERO, a two-year alliance, was created to increase employment opportunities for people with [criminal records](#) by educating community leaders, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders about the incentives available for hiring workers with criminal records.

“We are here to offer real resources to those who have paid their debt to society as well as to small business owners,” says **Cassius F. Butts**, the southeast regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration. “We are excited to take part in advancing the goal of President Obama and SBA Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet of “providing opportunities for all.”

“Ebenezer is pleased to partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration to expand opportunities for all. This will help some of the most marginalized members of our community,” says **Dr. Rev. Raphael G. Warnock**, senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church. “The future, health and prosperity of our neighborhoods is at stake.”

In addition to the signing and opening remarks, the event included detailed explanations of the various [programs and benefits](#) available to assist those affected by criminal records as well as business owners.

This partnership follows an earlier-announced SBA initiative that expands [access](#) to entrepreneurial education and microloans for formerly incarcerated individuals. These activities are a central part of The [White House’s Re-entry Initiative](#), a program designed to help people formerly incarcerated to successfully transition back into society.

SBA Georgia District Director, Terri Denison, MLK Sr. Community Resources Collaborative Executive Director, Detria Russ along with, Cassius F. Butts and Rev. Warnock, signed the SAM at the historic [MLK Sr. Community Resources Banquet Hall](#).

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